

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-06 DHA-02 SP-02 H-01
EURE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 /044 W
-----231759Z 058848 /41

P R 231210Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9449
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2146

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, OVIP, SP
SUBJECT: ALLARD LOWENSTEIN VISIT TO SPAIN

1. ALLARD LOWENSTEIN'S VISIT WAS QUITE HELPFUL. HE HAD SEVERAL USEFUL CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF THE OLD DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. CERTAIN POINTS FROM THE CONVERSATION HE AND EMBOFF HAD WITH FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AREILZA STAND OUT BECAUSE THEY CONVEY AREILZA'S SLANT ON THE PROBLEM OF A SUAREZ CANDIDACY FOR THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS.

2. AREILZA, AFTER REVIEWING IN FAMILIAR TERMS THE HISTORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC REFORM PROCESS AND THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL FORCES AS SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CENTRO DEMOCRATICO OF WHICH HE IS A LEADER, TALKED ABOUT THE ISSUE OF SUAREZ' CNADIDACY. HE HAD MET WITH SUAREZ A WHILE BACK AND HAD TOLD SUAREZ THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD EVERY RIGHT, AFTER DOING SUCH A GOOD JOB, TO WANT TO CONTINUE IN THE PRIME MINISTRY. HE TOLD SUAREZ THAT THE MOST SENSIBLE THING TO DO WAS TO REACH AN AGREEMENT NOW, PARTICULARLY WITH THE CENTRO DEMOCRATICO, AND ALSO WITH OTHER CENTRIST ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, TO THE EFFECT THAT
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THEY WOULD SUPPORT SUAREZ' RETENTION IN THE PRIME MINISTRY, NOT ONLY FOR THE PERIOD OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, BUT ALSO FOR A PERIOD THEREAFTER SO THAT THE SUAREZ GOVT. COULD DEAL WITH OTHER PRESSING NATIONAL PROBLEMS (E.G. THE ECONOMIC ISSUE).

3. IN AREILZA'S SCHEME THE CENTRIST GROUPS AND SUAREZ

WOULD REACH AGREEMENT (WHICH SHOULD BE EASY SINCE THEY SHARED THE SAME AIMS) ON GIVING FIRST PRIORITY IN THE NEW CORTES TO CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION, WHICH SHOULD TAKE ABOUT FIVE MONTHS AT MOST. AFTERWARDS, THE SUAREZ CABINET WOULD CONTINUE FOR PERHAPS ANOTHER SIX MONTHS OR SO, SO THAT THERE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE ELECTIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE APPROVAL OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION. RATHER THE FIRST ELECTIONS UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD TAKE PLACE IN, SAY, MID-1978. IN THIS FASHION, SUAREZ WOULD LEAD NOT ONLY THE LAST STAGE OF THE TRANSITION BUT ALSO THE FIRST POST-REFORM STAGE. ONLY THEN WOULD ELECTIONS UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION TAKE PLACE IN WHICH THE VARIOUS POLITICAL FIGURES WOULD TAKE THEIR CHANCES. WITH THIS AGREEMENT IN HAND THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR SUAREZ TO RUN THE RISKS OF A PARTISAN CANDIDACY NOW.

4. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, SUAREZ CHOSE TO BECOME THE HEAD OF A POLITICAL OPERATION, THEN SUAREZ WOULD UNNECESSARILY RENDER HIMSELF A PARTISIAN, CAUSING DIFFICULTIES FOR THE FUTURE. TO AREILZA, THE ARGUMENTS THAT THE ALIANZA POPULAR WAS STRONG HAD A SUSPICIOUS RING, ON EDESIGNED TO CAJOL SUAREZ INTO RUNNING. FRAGA WOULD GET HIS 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE OR SO, BUT THAT WASN'T ENOUGH TO THREATEN SUAREZ. PART OF THE PROBLEM, AREILZA VOLUNTEERED, LAY IN THE FACT THAT SUAREZ UNDERSTANDABLY SAW AREILZA AS A POTENTIAL CONTENDER. BUT HE, AREILZA, AT 67 WAS RUNNING OUT OF TIME, THOUGH HE OBVIOUSLY DID NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE

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MIGHT HAVE ONE MORE TRY FOR THE PRIME MINISTRY IN THE ELECTIONS HE POSTULATED FOR 1978. THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER WAS SUAREZ AND HE HAD NO DISAGREEMENT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. SUAREZ HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD IMPLEMENTED THE REFORM AREILZA ADVOCATED. MOREOVER, THERE WAS ANOTHER DRAWBACK TO SUAREZ' RUNNING, THE OPERATION WITH THE PSOE "HISTORICALS" HAD SOURED THE ATMOSPHERE. THERE WAS NO SENSE IN TRYING TO RADICALIZE THE PSOE, THAT WOULDN'T HELP SPAIN, AND IN FACT FELIPE GONZALEZ WAS A MODERATE.

5. WE ASKED ABOUT THE "AVILA FORMULA" IN WHICH SUAREZ MIGHT RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT FROM HIS SMALL HOME PROVINCE WITHOUT SETTING UP AN "OFFICIAL" PARTY. AREILZA IMPLIED THAT WASN'T TROUBLESOME, SAYING THE PROBLEM WAS NOT WHETHER SUAREZ RAN PER SE BUT THE BROADER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HIS RUNNING.

6. HE CLOSED BY SAYING THAT THE U.S. HAD PLAYED A DELI-

CATE AND VERY HELPFUL ROLE TO DATE AND THEN ASKED, NOT TOO SURPRISINGLY, THAT THE U.S. DISCREETLY USE ITS INFLUENCE TO GET SUAREZ TO AVOID WHAT AREILZA SAW AS THE PERILS OF BECOMING A PARTISAN POLITICAL LEADER AT THIS JUNCTURE. WE MADE NO REPLY. AREILZA NOTED THAT HE PLANNED TO VISIT THE U.S. IN THE SECOND WEEK OR SO OF APRIL, WELL SEPARATED FROM THE SUAREZ VISIT. EMBOFF INDICATED THAT DEPARTMENT WOULD BE HAPPY TO ARRANGE USEFUL APPOINTMENTS THERE, AND LOWENSTEIN OFFERED TO BE OF PERSONAL HELP, PARTICULARLY ON THE CONGRESSIONAL SIDE.

7. THIS REPORT OF CONVERSATION HAS BEEN CLEARED WITH ALLARD LOWENSTEIN.EATON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS, MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MADRID02146
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770099-1044
Format: TEL
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770331/aaaabawf.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 279faab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3025593
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLARD LOWENSTEIN VISIT TO SPAIN
TAGS: PINS, OVIP, SP, US, (LOWENSTEIN, ALLARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/279faab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009